

THE
PRACTICAL EFFICACY
OF THE
UNITARIAN DOCTRINE CONSIDERED;
IN A
SERIES OF LETTERS
TO THE
REVEREND ANDREW FULLER:

OCCASIONED BY HIS PUBLICATION
ENTITLED
THE CALVINISTIC AND SOCINIAN SYSTEMS EXAMINED
AND COMPARED, AS TO THEIR MORAL TENDENCY.

TO WHICH IS ADDED THE SECOND EDITION OF
AN ESSAY
ON THE
GROUNDS OF LOVE TO CHRIST.

BY JOSHUA TOULMIN, D.D.

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LONDON:
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Title prefixed to these Letters will lead the Reader to expect from them, chiefly, the discussion of one point; but that of a point of great importance in itself, and the main one to which a reply to Mr. Fuller's Work need be directed. The evidence which the Author has produced in support of his own opinion, is drawn from passages of scripture, which have so frequently occurred to all in the perusal of the New Testament, that it might seem unnecessary to alledge them; did it not often happen, that through the previous state of mind the most obvious things, in a writer, escape the reader; or do not impress him. The view, in which these passages now offer to notice, seems not to have been observed by Mr. Fuller: with whom the Author would scarcely have entered the lists, he grows so averse

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from personal controverfy, had it not been that his work appeared to afford a fair opportunity to bring forward the portions of " The Acts of the Apostles," which he has quoted, for the explicit purpose of shewing the Practical Efficacy of the Unitarian Doctrine. He submits the whole to the candid attention of Mr. Fuller, and of the Reader: hoping that TRUTH, and TRUTH *alone*, is the great object pursued by them and himself.

Taunton,
June 4th, 1796.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT.

It is with singular pleasure, that the Author of the following "Letters" can, since this Advertisement was drawn up, announce the speedy publication of an excellent discourse on "The Practical Tendency of" *Unitarian Sentiments*," preached at *Exeter*, on the 6th instant, before the Society of UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS, established in the WEST of ENGLAND, by the Reverend JOHN KENTISH; which was particularly pointed against MR. FULLER'S Representations, and entered into a more full and minute discussion of the distinct parts of his work, than is professed to be done in the ensuing pages.

28th July, 1796.

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The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been mentioned in the text of the book. The names are arranged in alphabetical order. The names are: [illegible text]

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LETTERS

TO THE

REVEREND ANDREW FULLER.

LETTER I.

REVEREND SIR,

IT was but lately that your celebrated piece, entitled "The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared;" fell in my way, so as to find me at leisure to read it. In the mean time I have heard it spoken of in high terms of approbation, and an expectation strongly expressed that some one, of those against whose religious scheme it is pointed, would think it incumbent upon him

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to

to reply to it*. I freely own, that I wish, that this expectation had ere now been answered. It appears to me, that your arguments do not carry that incontrovertible weight, which in the opinion of many they possess: and no one can doubt, that the gentlemen, on passages in whose writings many of your reflections are grounded, are every way equal to the contest, if they saw fit to enter the lists with you. As they have not done it, I presume, they think it sufficient to leave the candid reader to judge between you and them. But *their* silence does not bind others to a like reserve.

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* " Let no one, who like Mr. Robinson, is disposed to ex-
" change Christianity for Socinianism, say that he has accu-
" rately and maturely weighed the arguments on both sides,
" till he has read this work: i. e. Mr. FULLER's *Calvi-
" nistic and Socinian Schemes Compared*. It is a work
" which, at least, demands a reply. The author is one,
" with whom it will be no disparagement to Dr. PRIESTLEY
" himself, or any of his renowned champions to take up the
" gauntlet. Indeed, if they do not enter the lists with him,
" the public will be led to conclude, that their religion has
" received a wound from which it will not easily recover.
" Mr. FULLER's arguments are very little *ad hominem*, but
" almost all *ad doctrinam*. These arguments are ingenious
" and solid; and it seems incumbent, I say, on Dr. PRIEST-
" LEY or some of his friends to reply, though the task may
" not be quite so easy and pleasant as that of writing funeral
" eulogies on Mr. ROBINSON." *Brief Reflections on the
Eloquence of the Pulpit*; by the Rev. JOHN GARDINER,
Rector of Brailsford, in the County of Derby; and Curate of
St. Mary Magdalen, Taunton. P. 33, Note.

Another

Another may engage in the controversy, which they decline: and, thinking that it may serve the cause of scriptural truth and christian candor, the person who now addresses you will follow the impulse of his mind, to offer some thoughts on your publication.

But that my purpose may not be mistaken I would, here, premise, that a minute reply to your arguments is not intended: nor is it my design to follow you from chapter to chapter, and paragraph to paragraph. I shall confine myself to *one point*, but that a point which I think of the most essential moment, and *decisive* as to "the moral tendency," or practical influence of one of the two schemes, which you review.

You observe, that "there are two methods of reasoning, which may be used in ascertaining the moral tendency of principles. The first is by comparing the principles themselves with the nature of true holiness, and the agreement or disagreement of the one with the other. The second by referring to plain and acknowledged *facts*; judging of the nature of causes by their effects *."

On this last ground, Sir, would I now stand up an advocate for the tendency and efficacy, in a practical view, of the sentiments which you oppose as Socinian tenets. But, let it be, here, remem-

* Page 12.

bered, that I mean not to canvass the truth or falsehood of those assertions which you produce from the writings of Dr. Priestley, Mr. Lindsey, Mr. Belfham, and others; nor to examine either the accuracy of your quotations, or the justness of your conclusions. The principles, the moral tendency of which I propose to consider, are not the particular assertions of any individual author, nor any incidental sentiments any one may have connected with the avowal or defence of them. In this I may, perhaps, appear to depart from the topics you discuss; it may be so: but I am confident, that I shall come to the main point, which is the scheme itself: though I pass by passages scattered up and down in the writings of its known advocates, and taken in a detached form, out of the connection in which they originally stand.

The fundamental principles of those whom you choose to call SOCINIANS are, that "there is but
 " ONE God, the SOLE former, supporter, and
 " governor of the universe, the ONLY proper object of religious worship; and that there is but
 " one mediator between God and man, the MAN
 " Christ Jesus, who was commissioned by God to
 " instruct men in their duty, and to reveal the
 " doctrine of a future life."

These are the principles which they consider as forming the primitive system of the christian doctrine. On these proper Unitarian principles, they conceive the cause of true religion and virtue may
 be

be most effectually promoted: and that these plain, unadulterated truths of christianity, when fairly taught and inculcated, are of themselves sufficient to form the minds of those who embrace them, to that true dignity and excellence of character, to which the gospel was intended to elevate them *.

That they are so, is the point which I affirm, and shall endeavour to establish. If I can establish it by clear, decisive evidence, it will supersede the examination of that comparison into which you so fully enter, and of all the particulars into which your elaborate performance branches out.

We think it, Sir, a just ground of boast over our fellow-christians who hold different tenets from us, that we can express our fundamental opinions in the *words* of scripture. "To us there is but ONE GOD, the FATHER, of whom are all things, and we in Him: and ONE LORD Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." 1 Cor. viii. 6. "There is ONE GOD, and one Mediator between God and man, the MAN Christ Jesus," 1 Tim. ii. 3. And so, we think it a most material and propitious circumstance in the vindication of our sentiments, that we can appeal to scripture *facts*, to show their practical tendency and efficacy. "It was a distinguishing mark of primitive preaching," as

* Declaration of the London Unitarian Society.

you observe, " that it commended itself to every
 " man's conscience. People, in general, could not
 " sit unconcerned under it. We are told of some
 " who were *cut to the heart*, and took counsel to
 " slay the preachers; and of others who were
 " *pricked to the heart*, and said, " Men and
 " brethren, what shall we do *?" We think our-
 selves justified in asserting, that these impressions
 were made, this holy solicitude awakened by the
 preaching of the pure Unitarian doctrine. The
 world, we say, was converted by *this very doctrine*;
 on *this doctrine* were churches formed: *this* was
 the doctrine which worked effectually in them,
 who believed.

I accede to your remark, that " there is no-
 " thing like experiment in religion, as well as
 " in philosophy. As to his, *i. e.* Dr. Priestley's
 " talking what tendency his sentiments *would*
 " *have* upon heathens and mahometans, provided
 " a free intercourse could be obtained, this is all
 " conjecture. The best way to know their effi-
 " cacy is by trial, and trial hath been made †."
 Yes: and, I will add, to the glorious display of
 the efficacy of those principles; when such was
 the force with which they reached the minds of
 those to whom they were addressed, that " they
 " turned to God from idols, to serve the LIVING
 " AND TRUE GOD, and to wait for HIS SON from

* Page 24.

† Page 47.

" Heaven,

(7)

“ Heaven, whom HE raised from the dead, even
“ JESUS who hath delivered us from the wrath to
“ come.”

But here, Sir, I will pause and relieve your
attention and my own, by subscribing myself with
respect,

Your's, &c.

LETTER II.

REVEREND SIR,

AT the close of my former letter I advanced what may, probably, appear to some a bold assertion; namely, that the world was converted, that the sinners of mankind were brought to faith and repentance by the preaching of the *simple Unitarian* doctrine. You have said, "that Socinian writers " can not so much as *pretend*, that their doctrine " has been used to convert profligate sinners to the " love of God and holiness *." Now, I not only pretend, but hope to prove, that at the first planting of the gospel, *this* was the doctrine which was effectual for this purpose. Should it not, in modern times, be effectual to the same great ends, the cause must be sought in other circumstances, not in the nature of the doctrine or its inefficiency.

You are not to be told, that there are times, in which men hear not Moses and the Prophets; nor would be persuaded, though one rose from the dead: and yet you would not say, that the preaching of Moses and the Prophets, or the appearance of one from the dead, had not an efficacy, or a tendency, to bring men to repentance. It is well known to

* Page 23.

you,

you, that the flock of Christ, while he was on earth, was but "a little flock," and that prophecy represented him as lamenting the unsuccessfulness of his preaching, and saying, "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain." It is well known to you, that the apostles, notwithstanding that thousands were sometimes converted by their ministry, also found reason to cry out, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Rom. x. 16. Great multitudes were not converted: and, yet, you would not impeach the efficacy of the doctrine they preached. You would not say, that there was "nothing in it to alarm the conscience or interest the heart*." We think it, therefore, not a just consequence, nor a generous conclusion which, admitting the fact, you draw from the unsuccessfulness of those who preach the Socinian doctrine. And, if we can show, that this very doctrine was the doctrine, by which, in the first ages, the conscience was alarmed, you will be ready, I would hope, to retract your reflections.

To this argument, then, I will proceed. We will take, Sir, the New Testament into our hands; and we will open the history of the planting the gospel; of that period, "when the word of God

* Page 54.

“ was glorified, and thousands were born in a
“ day.”

The first sermon, so wonderfully successful, as to bring over to the christian faith about three thousand, was that of Peter on the day of Pentecost, Acts, ii. Let us go over it, and see what were the doctrines taught in it. They were these; that “ Jesus of
“ Nazareth was a MAN, approved of God, by
“ miracles, signs and wonders which God did
“ by him; that being by the right-hand of God
“ exalted, and having received of the FATHER the
“ promise of the holy spirit, he had shed forth that
“ gift which they then saw and heard; and that
“ God had made that same Jesus, whom they had
“ crucified, both Lord and Christ.” When the hearers of this discourse were pricked in their hearts, and said, “ What shall we do?” Peter replied, “ repent and be baptised every one, in the
“ name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins,
“ and ye shall receive the gift of the holy spirit:”
i. e. such gifts as they were then witnesses to. Here is nothing but the plain Unitarian doctrine. Here are none of those topics, which you suppose to have been the great topics on which the reformers insisted: and which, in later times, you conceive, rendered so illustriously successful the preaching of the FRANKS, the EDWARDS, the TENNANTS, and others *. Not a word came from the lips of Peter,

* Page 26.

here,

here, concerning the depravity of human nature, the deity and atonement of Christ, and justification by the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Not a word like that of the Moravians, who preached to the Greenlanders concerning "the Creator taking upon him human nature and dying for our sins *." Peter doth not in *this* manner preach Christ, and yet his preaching was effectual to the conversion of multitudes. He insists upon a few *plain facts* only, illustrative of the unity and supremacy of God the Father, the humanity and divine mission of Jesus of Nazareth; such *facts* as form the creed of the Unitarian: and yet his preaching, I repeat it, was effectual to awaken and convert multitudes. I have been, often, much affected and impressed with the simplicity of *this* discourse. I see none of the leading peculiar sentiments of calvinism in it; I see no doctrine of the trinity; I see no doctrine of a satisfaction to the divine justice in it. But the prominent features of this discourse are the fundamental articles of the Unitarian creed.

I look, next, into the third chapter of the Acts, and I hear the same Peter preaching, in the temple, to the people, who were filled with wonder and amazement, at the cure which the lame man had received. His sermon is to the same purpose as the former, namely, that "the God of Abraham,

* Page 47.

“ of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of their Fathers,
 “ had glorified his son Jesus: that those things
 “ which God had shewed by the mouth of all his
 “ prophets that Christ should suffer he had fulfil-
 “ led: that their duty was to repent and be con-
 “ verted, that their sins might be blotted out,
 “ when the times of refreshing shall come from
 “ the presence of the Lord; that the heavens must
 “ receive Jesus, until the times of the restitution
 “ of all things, which God had spoken by the
 “ mouth of his holy prophets since the world be-
 “ gan: that Moses had truly said, ‘ a *prophet* shall
 “ the LORD your GOD raise up unto you of your
 “ BRETHREN, like unto me: him shall ye hear
 “ in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you;’
 “ and therefore, addressing himself to the people,
 “ he adds, ‘ Unto you, first, GOD having raised
 “ up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turn-
 “ ing away every one of you from his iniquity.’”

Here God is uniformly spoken of as *one being*, and
 Jesus as ranking with the *prophets*, as one of the
 human race, of Jewish extract, raised from the
 dead and invested with authority to require the
 obedience of men to his commandments. But, as
 to the doctrines, which you, Sir, conceive to be
 the only effectual principles by which repentance
 towards God, and faith in Christ Jesus are to be
 produced, I meet with none of them here. Yet
 though none of those principles are insisted upon,
 or even mentioned, though here is nothing but a
 pure

pure Unitarian discourse, I find, and you, Sir, methinks, must observe it with astonishment, as an effect very contrary to your apprehension, "Many
 " believed, and the number of men were about
 " five thousand." Ch. iv. 4.

I then accompany Peter before the tribunal of the high-priest, and I again listen, to hear his doctrine: not disgusted with the simplicity of his former discourses, but impressed with their simplicity and the energy with which they acted. Such was *that* energy, that I see no occasion that there was for him to introduce, in a future discourse, any other, new principles to aid its operation on the human mind. I wait, however, to hear what he will say; and how far he will pursue the same strain of address or deviate from it. The same strain is adopted, and the same principles, as before, alone are urged. "Be it known unto you
 " all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the
 " name of Jesus Christ, of Nazareth, whom you
 " crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even
 " by him doth this man (*i. e.* the lame man of
 " whom we read in the former chapter) stand here
 " before you whole. This is the stone which was
 " set at nought by you builders, which is become
 " the head of the corner: neither is there salvation
 " in any other; for there is none other name under
 " heaven, given among men, whereby we must
 " be saved." I can discover here, also, no other doctrines but the unity of God, the humanity of
 Christ,

Christ, his resurrection from the dead and salvation through him. Peter speaks as would an Unitarian. He and John were dismissed with a strict charge, not to speak at all, nor to teach in the name of Jesus. On being dismissed, they went to their company and reported all the chief priests and elders had said unto them, on which they all, with one accord, lift up their voices in an act of devotion, addressing Jehovah as *one person*, saying:—

“ THOU art GOD who hast made heaven and earth,
 “ and the sea, and all that in them is; who by the
 “ mouth of THY servant, David, didst say, why
 “ did the heathen rage, &c. : for of a truth against
 “ thy holy child (or servant) Jesus whom THOU
 “ hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate,
 “ with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel
 “ gathered together; and now, Lord, grant unto
 “ thy servants that with all boldness they may
 “ speak thy word; and that signs and wonders
 “ may be done by the name of THY holy child,
 “ (servant) Jesus.” The historian informs us that
 upon this, “ all were filled with the holy spirit,
 “ and spake the *word of God* with boldness.” I
 pursue the history to learn what was *the word*
 which they preached, and I am told, v. 33. that,
 “ with great power gave the apostles witness of
 “ the *resurrection* of Jesus, and great grace was
 “ upon them all.” Here is not a trace of any
 other doctrines but those fundamental principles,
 which Unitarians hold. All corresponds with their
 ideas

ideas of the primitive christian doctrine. There is not a hint of those principles which, you conceive, so essentially necessary to the conversion of the sinner.

The boldness with which, in contradiction to the order of their superiors, these holy men resumed their province of preaching Christ, did not go long unobserved. In the next chapter I find them imprisoned; and, by a miraculous power being delivered from their confinement, again preaching in the temple, and again summoned before the council, defending their conduct and stating their doctrine. My attention is again awakened to the truths they deliver. I ask, whether they be different from those plain, but divine, principles I have before heard from their lips? I ask, whether they now begin, after this further effusion of the spirit, to incorporate with them other sublime mysteries, about which they had before been silent? The answer I receive is, that "Peter and the other apostles, said—the GOD of our fathers raised up
 " Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree:
 " him hath GOD exalted with HIS right hand, to
 " be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance to
 " Israel, and forgiveness of sins; and we are his witnesses of these things, and so also is the holy spirit
 " which GOD hath given to them that obey him." Still the same Unitarian principles, and these only, form the subjects of the apostle's preaching: which is concisely expressed in the 42d verse, by saying:
 " daily

“ daily in the temple, and in every house they
 “ ceased not to teach and preach Jesus, the Mes-
 “ siah;” *i. e.* that Jesus was the Messiah. The
 supremacy of God the father, the humanity of
 Jesus, as a *man* crucified, his character as one
 exalted to be a prince and a saviour, are the doc-
 trines of this discourse: and on the ground of these
 plain doctrines, these simple *facts*, unaided by the
 influence of those principles which form the cal-
 vinistic or trinitarian system, as I learn from v. 1.
 of the next chapter, the number of the disciples in
 those days was multiplied. This was the doctrine
 then, that converted the world. Yet I am ad-
 vanced no farther than the Unitarian creed leads
 me.

The following chapters, viz. the vith. and viith.
 place us, with Stephen, before the council, to hear
 his defence of the christian faith, and to witness
 his martyrdom. His discourse is a brief review of
 the conduct of the God of glory to the Jewish
 nation, and before he could enter upon the princi-
 ples of christianity, he is interrupted by his hearers
 and hurried away to death. Here then I meet with
 nothing directly to our argument, except, that the
 divine being is uniformly spoken of as *one person*.

The eighth chapter records, in general terms only,
 the preaching of Philip to the city of Samaria, and
 the conversation he had with the pious eunuch of
 Æthiopia: in each case faith and conversion were
 produced. But I am led to conclude, that the
 same

same general, Unitarian, principles were the grounds on which these excellent effects arose; for I am not informed of any other principles having been, on either occasion, inculcated. That Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, was the simple principle on which the eunuch was baptized; and of the Samaritans it is said, that, when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women. I am not authorised, therefore, to suppose, that the tenor of his discourses, though successful, was different from those of Peter on former occasions.

I next meet with this apostle receiving an extraordinary commission to preach unto Cornelius and his house, the words whereby he and all his house should be saved. Acts xi. 14. I am all attention on an occasion so singular and solemn. Peter delivers his message: and this is the word, which he saith, " God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, (he is Lord of all) which was published throughout all Judea and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached, namely, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, with the holy spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed with the devil: for God was with him. Him whom the Jews slew, and hanged upon a tree, God raised up the third day and shewed him openly—and he
" commanded

“ commanded us to preach unto the people, and to
 “ testify that it is he who was ordained of God to
 “ be the judge of the quick and the dead : to him
 “ give all the prophets witness, that through his
 “ name whosoever believeth in him shall receive
 “ remission of sins.” The same doctrine, I per-
 ceive, as before. No intimation about a trinity,
 a satisfaction to the divine justice, the godhead of
 Christ, and other opinions, which form the cal-
 vinistic creed : and yet, besides the conversion of
 all who heard this to the faith of Christ, there was
 a remarkable and miraculous sanction given to it
 from heaven, for while Peter was speaking the
 holy spirit fell on all them who heard the word.
 Was not this a divine attestation to the truth and
sufficiency of his doctrine ; a proof that he delivered
 the whole counsel of God, so far as it was neces-
 sary to the salvation of his audience ? But I meet
 here with none of those doctrines, which you, Sir,
 conceive, are a necessary foundation for faith and
 repentance. I meet with none but such which as,
 an Unitarian, I embrace and rejoice in with devout
 gladness.

The eleventh and twelfth chapters furnish no-
 thing to the point before us, except that they who
 were scattered abroad upon the persecution that
 arose about Stephen, travelling to a distance, it is
 said, “ preached the word ; and some of them spake
 “ unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.”
 These are general expressions, and the only clue
 to

to their meaning and importance, is the discourses which we have reviewed ; and which afford nothing to justify such a construction of them, as your creed might dispose you to put on them.

A new character next appears in the kingdom of Christ, espousing his cause with peculiar ardor, and acting under a singular commission ; even he, to whom “ it was given to preach among the Gentiles, the unfearchable riches of Christ ;” I mean the apostle PAUL.

But here let us pause.

I am, Reverend Sir,
Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER

LETTER III.

REVEREND SIR,

FOLLOWING the narrative of the historian, I accompany the apostle Paul, preaching in the synagogue of Antioch, addressing first the Jews and then the Gentiles; calling the former to give audience, he glances at the leading events in their history, and then advances this principle; that "God, according to HIS promise, had raised unto Israel, a Saviour Jesus; that, though they had found no cause of death in him, yet they desired Pilate, that he should be slain; that God raised him from the dead, and in this had fulfilled the promises HE had made unto the fathers; that through this MAN was preached the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believed were justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." This doctrine he called the word "*of salvation.*" The Gentiles besought that these words might be preached unto them the next Sabbath-day. On hearing this doctrine, many of the Jews, and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, and "the Gentiles were glad and glorified the word of the Lord." But where, I ask here also, are those principles

principles which Mr. Fuller apprehends are essential to conversion? if the apostle preached them, where is the sincerity of the historian, in not recording those parts of his discourse? If the apostle did not insist on them, why should it be expected that I or any other Unitarian should urge them, in order to turn a sinner from the error of his way? May we not hope, that *we* shall be the happy and honoured instruments of building up the church of God? may we not hope that *our* preaching will not be deficient in point of doctrine, of that doctrine which is the means of turning others to righteousness, if we adhere simply to the plan on which the apostle of the Gentiles preached; HE who was sent to be salvation unto the ends of the earth? To effect the great ends of his ministry the topics on which he dwelt were such as are now called Unitarian doctrines: and by these topics the great ends of his ministry *were* effected.

In the synagogue of Thessalonica the apostle pursues the same strain; opening and alledging, “that
 “ Christ must needs have suffered and have risen
 “ again, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto
 “ you, is Christ.” Here the idea given of the person of Christ is that of a *man*, suffering according to the counsels and purpose of God, and raised again, to attest his character as the Christ. On *this* simple Unitarian principle “some believed and converted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout
 “ Greeks

“ Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief wo-
 “ men not a few.” This doctrine, it appears, did
 affect and interest their minds.

I then attend the apostle preaching, before the
 supreme council, in affairs of state, at Athens; as
 illustrious a court as the world ever exhibited, but
 in need of every divine instruction, being idolators,
 greatly addicted to superstition: and to whom those
 principles which you reckon so essential to the con-
 version of mankind would, on account of their
 novelty, be peculiarly important and acceptable;
 for “ the Athenians and strangers there, spent
 “ their time in nothing else but either to tell or
 “ hear some new thing.” It was an inviting op-
 portunity for the apostle to be full and explicit in
 his instructions. Here I should expect to hear the
 apostle, had he known the system or entered into
 the views on which they have acted, preaching
 agreeable to the model of the Edwards, the Ten-
 nants, and the Fullers of later times. If he did
 it, I cannot learn it from the christian historian.
 He informs us no more, than that upon occasion of
 an altar dedicated to the UNKNOWN GOD, Paul
 said, “ Whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare
 “ I unto you, GOD who made the world and all
 “ things therein, seeing that HE is Lord of heaven
 “ and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with
 “ hands; forasmuch then as we are the offspring
 “ of God, we ought not to think that the godhead
 “ is

“ is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by
 “ art or man’s device : and the times of this igno-
 “ rance God winked at ; but now commandeth all
 “ men every where to repent ; because he hath
 “ appointed a day, in which HE will judge the
 “ world in righteousness by that MAN, whom HE
 “ hath ordained ; whereof HE hath given assurance
 “ unto all men, in that HE hath raised him from
 “ the dead.” Here the godhead is spoken of as
 we would speak of one intelligent being, the per-
 sonal pronouns *he* and *him*, of the singular number,
 are appropriated to him ; and Christ is spoken of
 as a MAN, whom he raised from the dead, and who
 hath a commission to judge the world. The doc-
 trine is pure Unitarianism. Yet this plain doc-
 trine, these simple facts, had a great effect : for,
 though some mocked, certain believed and came
 unto the preacher ; or were converted by a strain
 of preaching in your opinion, Sir, totally inade-
 quate to the effect really produced by it. But, in
 the review of this event, I am ready to say, after
 the apostle, “ the foolishness of God is wiser than
 “ men, and the weakness of God is stronger than
 “ men.” 1 Cor. i. 25.

In the progress of his ministry, after this, Paul
 is found at Corinth. He taught at this place, that
 “ Jesus was the Christ.” ch. xviii. 5. This was
 the subject, the sole subject of the preaching of
 Apollos at Ephesus, “ who was mighty in the
 “ scriptures.”

“ scriptures.” The effect wrought in each case was remarkable: in the former, while the Jews opposed themselves and blasphemed, “ Crispus with
 “ all his house believed on the Lord, and many of
 “ the Corinthians, hearing, believed:” in the latter the preacher “ mightily convinced the Jews.” We read nothing of sentiments, corresponding to the calvinistic and trinitarian schemes, having been taught in either place. If you suppose, Sir, that these sentiments were inculcated and blended with the great truth, the Messiahship of Jesus, it is *supposition* only, which is not supported by the testimony of the historian, nor by the practice of the apostolical preachers on any other occasion. You may build on suppositions; but I must be allowed to adhere to what is written, and to conclude that the historian has not kept back and suppressed any thing necessary to afford us a complete idea of the substance of the discourses of the apostles, or of what was essential to the wonderful effect they produced.

The following chapter relates a singular circumstance. Paul finds certain disciples at Ephesus, some who were members of the newly erected kingdom of God; but, as he discovered on enquiry, that they were so in an imperfect and defective manner; “ they had been baptised into John’s baptism
 “ only, and had not so much as heard that there
 “ was any holy spirit:” *i. e.* “ any gifts of it
 “ given

“ given to men and received by them *.” What is the instruction afforded in this case, merely similar to those advanced on former occasions. They are informed, that they should believe on him, which was to come after John, viz. on Jesus Christ; or on Jesus, the Christ. But still how far this minister of Christ fell short of that standard of faith, by which you conceive conversion is to be effected, even when he designedly applies himself to make up what was lacking in the faith of some! And this maimed, defective representation of the gospel, as it would probably be called, if coming from the lips of *modern* Unitarians, is owned by heaven: for Paul laying his hands upon these disciples, “ the holy ghost came upon them: they spake with tongues and prophesied.”

A declaration of the apostle in his fine speech to the elders at Ephesus, which the 20th chapter lays before us, increases my surprise at this wonderful silence, that I notice in all the discourses of the apostle, on those points which you consider as so necessary to the success of preaching. He appeals to those elders, that he had kept back nothing that

* They could not mean, that they had never heard of the holy ghost; for John had taught his followers, that Jesus was to baptise with the holy ghost. Matt. iii. 11. and Luke iii. 16. And by the holy ghost is meant the gifts of it. Ch. viii. 15, 17, 18, 19. Bp. Pearce in loc. The Cambridge MSS. reads, *εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον λαμβανουσι τινες*, i. e. “ that any had received the holy spirit.”

was profitable, v. 20. "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God." v. 27. How could this have been said, if those principles on which you place so great a stress are parts of the counsel of God? Or, if the apostle had preached on these topics, how could the historian, when he came to record this solemn appeal, fail to recollect, that he made a very defective report of the apostle's sermons? The imputation of such a neglect and omission can not be admitted against the sacred historian, even by those who do not consider him as writing under a divine inspiration. It would be great irreverence towards the spirit of truth in those to allow it, who conceive that the holy spirit dictated to the historian the facts and discourses he should record for the instruction of future ages of the christian church. My respect for the writer of the Acts; my piety will not permit me to suppose, that the only memoirs we have of the first planting of the gospel could be so exceedingly deficient, so totally fail to inform us of the essential parts of discourses which converted the sinner, and christianised the world.

It confirms me in the persuasion, that there is no such omission in the narrative of the historian, that in relating the speech of Paul to Agrippa, in which the apostle gives an account of his life, conversion and labours, when he comes to the subjects

subjects of his preaching, all that he says is,
 “ having obtained help of God, I continue unto
 “ this day, witnessing both to small and great,
 “ saying none other things than those which the
 “ Prophets and Moses did say, should come, that
 “ Christ should suffer, and that he should be the
 “ first that should rise from the dead, and should
 “ shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.”

v. 22, 23. It appears from this, if his representation of his own preaching is true and faithful, or if the historian has truly reported his word, that he never touched on the doctrine of the trinity, or the godhead of Christ, on the atonement, or the satisfaction made by his death to divine justice. This is the more remarkable, because, according to what he declares, v. 18. the great and interesting objects of his ministry, the purposes which he was sent to effect, were to open “ the eyes of the
 “ Gentiles, and to turn them from darkness to
 “ light, and from the power of Satan unto God,
 “ that they might receive the forgiveness of sins,
 “ and inheritance among them that are sanctified
 “ by faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

I may applaud, Sir, the piety, the zeal, the good intentions, with which the moravian preachers, or the Elliots, or yourself, might address the heathens of Greenland, or America, on the fall and corruption of nature through Adam, on the Creator's taking upon him human nature and dying for our sins: but I do not see such a mode of

preaching followed by those who first embarked in the glorious and philanthropic employment of converting the world to the faith of Christ. They, I presume, were fully instructed in the mind of Christ, adopted the most proper means of accomplishing their embassy, and have furnished, for future ages, true specimens of the christian faith, and divine models of preaching it.

I repeat it again; and leave it, Sir, for your consideration, that I can find no other doctrine, in all the preceeding discourses which have now passed under our review, but what is, in modern style, called the Unitarian doctrine. This is that "word of God," that "gospel," that made both Jews and Gentiles believers and members of the church of Christ, "purifying their hearts," Acts xv. 9. And carrying with it, "remission of sins," Ch. x. 43. The matter hath, for many years, appeared to me in this light. The conviction produced, by reading "the Acts of the apostles," both of the truth and efficacy of Unitarian principles, the conviction that *these* were the principles by which the world was converted, on which christian churches were founded, is so strong that I cannot resist it.

Here is a proper place to relieve your attention, and that of the reader. With a just esteem for your abilities and piety,

I am, Sir,

Your's, &c.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

REVEREND SIR,

IT is to be hoped, that since you read the last letter, you and the reader have not trusted to my accuracy, or fidelity; but have taken the New Testament into your hands, and examined "The Acts of the Apostles" for yourselves. I am very confident, that you must have found that *silence*, that entire silence there, concerning the doctrines of the trinitarian and calvinistic systems, with a conviction of which my mind has been strongly impressed.

This hath been owned, by those who would gladly have derived support to their own sentiments from the sermons of the Apostles: and it hath been resolved into the caution and prudence of these holy men; fearful of alarming the Jews, who thought Christ was a mere man, with the doctrine of his godhead before they were well grounded in the belief, that Jesus was the Christ. Athanasius does not pretend to find one place in "The Acts," where this doctrine was clearly and distinctly taught, though he quotes four places, in which the humanity of Christ is plainly spoken of. Chrysostom allows, that at Athens, Paul called Jesus simply a MAN and nothing further, and for a

good reason: for, if they often attempted to stone Christ himself, when he spake of his equality with the Father, and called him on that account a blasphemer, they would hardly have received this doctrine from fishermen, especially after speaking of him, as crucified. According to other fathers, this caution and reserve were extended to the epistles, written to the churches*.

Not the *silence only* of the Apostles on those topics, which you deem so essentially necessary to bring men to faith and repentance, hath been admitted by orthodox writers: but the *efficacy* and *sufficiency*, by itself, of that Unitarian principle, "That Jesus was the Christ," on which the Apostolic preachers insist, hath also been granted, and even contended for. The pious Bishop Patrick's words are remarkable. "To believe, that Jesus "is the Christ, this ALONE is the faith which can "regenerate man, and put a divine spirit into him; "that is, make him a conqueror over the world as "Jesus was†." On this simple article was the eunuch baptised. And, even in the third century, the profession of faith, proposed to the Catechumens previously to baptism, did not deviate from these Unitarian principles, on which the first christian

* Priestley's History of the Early Opinions concerning Christ, vol. iii. p. 86—122. and Letters to Dr. Horsley, part i. p. 37—54, and p. 120.

† Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity, p. 291.

church was founded. "The rule of faith," saith Tertullian, "is only one, admitting of no change
 "or emendation, requiring us to believe in one
 "God Almighty, the maker of the world; and in
 "his son Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary,
 "crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised from the
 "dead on the third day, received up into Heaven,
 "now sitting at the right hand of the Father, and
 "who will come again to judge both the living
 "and the dead, even by the resurrection of the
 "flesh. This law of faith remaining, other things,
 "being matters of discipline and conduct, admit of
 "new corrections, the grace of God co-operat-
 "ing*." This creed, Sir, contains none of your
 articles.

Nay, even to this day, after, as we conceive, the pure gospel hath been adulterated with a number and variety of the doctrines of men, and impure mixtures of error and superstition; even now doth the church of England admit to the profession

* "*Regula fidei una omnino est, sola immobilis & irrefor-
 "mabilis credendi, scilicet, in unicum Deum omnipotentem,
 "mundi conditorem, et filium ejus Jesum Christum, natum ex
 "Virgine Maria, crucifixum sub Ponteo Pilato, tertio die
 "resuscitatum a mortuis, receptum in cœlis, sedentem nunc
 "ad dextram Patris, venturum judicare vivos et mortuos, per
 "carnis etiam resurrectionem.*" Tertullian de Virginit.
 Veland. p. 385. in Lord King's Enquiry into the Constitution
 of the Primitive Church, &c. p. 60. part ii. 1691. The
 translation above is taken from Dr. Priestley's Early Opinions,
 vol. i. p. 313.

of christianity and to her communion adults, on merely Unitarian principles; correspondent to those on which the first christian churches, we have seen, were formed. In the service for the baptism of those of riper years, the priest is directed to ask the convert whether he believe the Apostles' creed, which he repeats to him; upon his profession that he doth, and that he desires to be baptised into *that* faith, without one word of *any other article* he baptises him, and then declares him a CHRISTIAN in these words; "We receive this person into the congregation of Christ's flock, and sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that he shall not be ashamed to CONTINUE Christ's faithful soldier and servant." This is the practice of that church which hath incorporated into its articles the doctrines of the reformers, to which you allude. Her *ministers* must subscribe to the trinitarian and calvinistic systems; but she receives to her *communion* those who avow a faith no more than Unitarian.

These facts, as to the allowed sufficiency and efficacy of principles, really, Unitarian should protect us, whom you call socinians, from censure. We have, in this respect, the orthodox church with us. But I urge these facts not as *authorities* only, under which we may seek protection. I consider them as proofs of the power of truth, which is great and will prevail; which, in this instance, forces an assent from those whose general views
and

and aims have been to make something more necessary to salvation and church-communion, than it appears the Apostles preached to this end.

When I consider these things, I am ready to conclude, that the glory of our holy religion stands firm without admitting into it the profession or preaching of those topics, to which you affix so great an importance. My conscience will not permit *me* to make more necessary to the efficacy and success of the gospel, than what the Apostles found to be so. My conscience forbids me to make an addition to those principles, on which *they* brought men into the kingdom of Christ, formed churches and triumphed over the powers of darkness. Nothing has more contributed to make me an Unitarian, than the books of The Acts: than observing what is *there* related to have been preached as the doctrine that would convert and save men, and what actually had this effect.

However, Sir, it may be with you and others, I have, also, found my devout affections excited and elevated without the aid of those sentiments and that language, which the calvinistic system supplies. I meet with strains of fervent devotion, in the writers of that persuasion, running through many pages, without being blended with their peculiar opinions. Frequently in the works of a Flavel, a Baxter, and a Howe I have met with large portions, where these sentiments have not occurred; and it hath struck me, that the serious, practical spirit

seems not to suffer by the omission. The conclusion, I have drawn from this, has been, that the whole discourse, or the whole treatise, might have been without them, and yet, that spirit would not have evaporated: for it flowed from general principles, independently of those peculiar dogmas. This remark applies, in its fullest extent, to the excellent piece of Mr. Howe's, entitled *The Vanity of this Mortal Life*. It applies, with the exception of a few sentences, to that rapturous piece of devotion in Baxter's *Saints Rest*, called *Heavenly Contemplation*. It applies to a justly admired tract of another distinguished writer, of the last century, the great Mr. John Smith, of Cambridge; in whose discourse on the Nobleness and Excellence of internal, vital Religion, there is not, I think, a sentiment or expression, but what is entirely agreeable to the Unitarian system: and yet of this discourse one, whose opinion will have weight with you, saith; "for sublimity of thought, strength of expression, and ardor of piety, I never saw its equal; and I am confident I never shall see any thing superior to it, while I live in this world*." This remark applies to that pious puritan, Mr. John Rogers' *Sixty Memorials for a Godly Life*; dictated by a most lively sense of religion, but containing no sentiments but such as agree with the

* Ryland in his edition of Dr. Cotton Mather's *Student and Pastor*, p. 210.

Unitarian system. So strictly compatible with, so favourable to the cultivation of a devotional spirit is this system; I have now before me a small volume of pious exercises formed wholly upon it, and drawn from every chapter in the New Testament, entitled *An Help in Devotion*, being the New Testament considered with a view to what every chapter in it doth furnish christians with, as proper to assist them in their private and family devotions; by Samuel Bolde, Rector of Steeple cum Tyneham, Dorsetshire; 12mo. 1736. The same person was author of *Animadversions on Dr. Edwards' Socinianism Unmasked*; and of a *Sermon on the same subject with Mr. Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity*.

These are to me proofs, that the calvinistic system is not essential to devotion. I see the devotional spirit diffuse itself through pages, through treatises, where there is not a trace of that system. It lives and glows without it, and rises to a degree of fervor and spirituality equal to any compositions, where that system and the phraseology of it have mingled and incorporated themselves. Though it is not to be doubted, that many pious and worthy persons having been always accustomed to give vent to their devotional feelings in language and associations of this kind, are ready to conceive that separated from them, devotion would languish and die away. This is a mistake. This apprehension is the creature of habit, not of reason, or reflection, or fact.

Whatever opinion you, Sir, may entertain or endeavour to give your reader, concerning the piety of focinians, numbers of them have been persons of eminent piety. To mention the living might be invidious and aukward. But I appeal to the memoirs of the dead ; of Faustus Socinus himself, of the Polish Brethren, of Biddle, of Emlyn, of Hopkins, of Lardner, of Jebb, and of Price. If the number of excellent characters should not be so great, as among other denominations ; you are sensible that a cause of this is easily to be assigned ; the number of focinians hath always, in the later ages of the church, born a small proportion to the number of trinitarians and calvinists ; and the number of sincere, conscientious persons attentive to the cultivation of pious affections, hath born a small proportion to those, who have been nominal focinians or calvinists. I need not remind you, that the operation and force of the human mind are limited, and if there have been, or be now, a defect in devotion among focinians, compared with calvinists, it is to be accounted for in a manner not at all disparaging to the principles of the former, with respect to their influence on the pious feelings. They, deeply engaged in the investigation of truth, absorbed in gaining just ideas, may have been necessarily betrayed into a neglect of the culture of the heart and affections. Had they attended equally to *this* as to *that*, they would have felt an energy in the principles which they held in common with their fellow christians,

to

to raise and feed, and maintain the devotional fervor of the mind.

The perfections and providence of God, the awful realities of a future state, the resurrection, the hope of eternal life, the grace of God in Christ Jesus, independently of calvinistic phraseology or systematical explanations, are the fuel by which the fire of devotion is kindled and supplied. The Apostle speaking of Jesus Christ, saith: "Who is of God made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." To this account of things every christian, of every denomination, the Unitarian christian not less than others, giveth a most ready and cordial assent. Here he findeth food for pious gratitude, for humble hope, for elevated faith, while he believeth, that GOD, even the FATHER is the author of the gospel dispensation; that it was communicated by Jesus Christ, as the minister of reconciliation, and the author of salvation; and that HE conveyeth to us, through him, knowledge, pardon, holiness, and eternal life. While the christian, even the Unitarian feels these to be blessings of unspeakable importance, blessings which render the gospel a pearl of invaluable price, his high, grateful and devout admiration of the value and excellence of the gospel, and of the grace and goodness displayed in it, is drawn forth, and shows itself in a religious temper and acts of piety.

I am, Sir,

Your's respectfully.

LETTER

LETTER V.

REVEREND SIR,

IN your second letter*, you call upon "your christian brethren to examine matters to the bottom, and judge for themselves, whether they might not as well expect grapes of thorns or figs of thistles, as repentance towards God or faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ proceeding from focinian principles." I cordially go along with you in recommending a thorough examination, and I have, in my turn, endeavoured to assist our readers in this enquiry. The conclusion, in my opinion, comes out quite the reverse of what you represent it. My appeal hath been to *facts*: and those facts, in a series and succession of them, exhibit thousands of cases, where repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ, arose from the principles and those principles only, to which the modern Unitarian subscribes. This leaves on my mind a deep impression of the great impropriety of your publication, both of its general design, and of the insinuation and reflections with which it abounds. In vindication of those principles which you attack and depreciate, in vindication of their moral ten-

* Page 21.

dency and powerful efficacy, I call upon the churches of Christ formed in Judea and Samaria, I call upon the converts at Corinth and Athens, and I say unto them, "Ye are our epistle, known and read of all men; ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart."

Whatever may be the state of piety among modern Unitarians, whether their congregations abound in conversions of the profane to a life of holiness or not, it is plain, that the defect doth not arise from the nature of their leading and discriminating principles; because the first christian churches were formed upon those principles. But the preaching of them was not, in the first instance, always successful. You are not to be informed, Sir, that at Antioch the Jews "spake against those things which were spoken by Paul:" that at Thessalonica, many "Jews believed not:" that at Athens, "some" whom the Apostle addressed, "believed not:" and others postponed the consideration of the subject to another time. Yet, you would not construe this unsuccessfulness to the discredit of the doctrine preached. We may complain, then, that the conclusion you draw against our system, from the inefficacy of our doctrine, is not candidly nor justly drawn.

I will venture to assert, that, in some degree, our

unsuccessfulness is to be imputed to the conduct of those who, instead of refuting our doctrine by plain scripture and sound argument, give representations of it that are invidious, raise prejudices against it, and prevent its having a fair hearing. The treatment we meet with, is a just ground for complaint and remonstrance. Our "congregations" are spoken of "as gradually dwindling away and "generally falling into decay*." Our principles are described as having nothing in them, comparatively speaking, "to alarm the conscience or interest the heart†." Our sincerity, zeal, and devotion are placed on a footing with that of Saul, the persecutor and enemy of Christ; and it is more than intimated, that a species of devotion may obtain to a high degree, consistently enough with the worst principles; and that the gospel had no worse enemies, than the *devout* and honourable among the Jews‡. After we are held up in these lights, from the pulpit and the press, it is then urged against us, by way of argument and reproach, that our preaching is without effect. The most that, under such circumstances, so unfavourable to its reception, can be expected is, that a *few* will hear it, and that few will be built up in faith and holiness and the love of God.

Your representations of our principles, besides being thus invidious, are not properly directed, nor

* Page 54.

† Page 54.

‡ Page 10.

to *the point*. Instead of applying your arguments to the general, the fundamental principles of our system, that there is ONE GOD the FATHER, and one mediator between God and man, the MAN Christ Jesus; you only bring forward particular positions, scattered through the works or discourses of several eminent persons, known and able advocates of the Unitarian faith, which have no immediate and direct connexion with the first principles of it. These positions may, or may not be true, and the truth of the great doctrines of the unity of God and the humanity of Christ remain, in either case, unaffected by it. Yet these positions, the speculations of intelligent individuals are collected together and exhibited as the essential principles of the creed of Unitarians, as the *credenda* of the whole party. This mode of attack appears to me to be neither fair, nor conclusive.

Your using, Sir, the term, SOCINIANS, has also a natural tendency to affect our reputation and usefulness. It is a term of reproach, and we object to it on *every ground*. It doth not truly express our principles; for the opinions of modern Unitarians differ materially from those of socinians; and they choose not to be denominated by a name which may imply that they receive tenets they do not hold. It doth not convey a true idea, or an idea that we can by any means allow, concerning the *origin* of our religious sentiments; for, while it intimates that the doctrines of the unity of person in the godhead
and

and the humanity of Jesus can not be traced to any higher antiquity than the times of Socinus, it is known that *we* consider these doctrines as the *primitive* truth; and the passages, which I have brought forward prove, that they were the leading principles of the apostolical sermons. It doth not give a just view of the *grounds* of their faith; for, so far are they from taking their opinions from Socinus, the majority of them, it may be presumed, are not acquainted with a page of his works; nor do any of them acknowledge his *authority* in matters of faith. *ONE is our master*, even CHRIST. And it is not a *candid* description of them. For, though Socinus was a truly excellent man, distinguished by many eminent virtues; one who studied the scriptures diligently, sacrificed much and endured much in the cause of religion; yet, through ignorance of his character and through prejudice, an odium is connected with his name; and the application of it to any persons, now carries that odium and obloquy along with it. You assure us, indeed, that *you* do not use it "for the mean purpose of reproach *;" but I am apt to think, such is the power of habit and association, this declaration will be insufficient to wipe off the reproach, that hath long and uniformly been connected with it.

The name by which we choose to be called is, you are sensible, that of UNITARIANS. We ap-

* Preface, page 7.

prove of this, because, while it precisely describes our distinguishing tenet, it doth not imply the admitting of any human authority in matters of religion. But you will not allow the exclusive use of this name. The term, as constantly expressed by ourselves, you say " signifies those professors of christianity who worship but *one* God ; but this is " not that, wherein they can be allowed to be distinguished from others ; for what professors of " christianity are there who profess to worship a " plurality of Gods ? Trinitarians profess also to be " Unitarians ; they, as well as their opponents, " believe there is but *one* God *."

This appears to me a strange, and contradictory assertion. It is to say, that they who admit a three-fold division or distinction in the divine nature, hold the same tenet with those who contend for its simple unity ; that they who ascribe to each division separately all divine perfections and prerogatives, embrace the same doctrine with those who appropriate them to one only ; or that plurality and unity of person is the same. The trinitarian doctrine, according to the articles of the church of England is, that " in the unity of the godhead there be *three* " *persons* of one substance, power and eternity ; the " Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." According to the catechism of the reverend assembly of divines, " there are three persons in the godhead, the Father,

* Preface, page 7.

“ the Son and the Holy Ghost ; and these three are
 “ one ; the same in substance, equal in power and
 “ glory.” In opposition to this doctrine of
 “ three persons making one God,” the Unitarians
 “ maintain that the essence of the Deity is simple
 “ and undivided ; that God the Father only (and
 “ not the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) is
 “ the true and living God, and the fountain of all
 “ power and perfection in the universe ; and that
 “ to elevate any other beings to an equality with
 “ him is idolatry and impiety *.” The difference
 between these two creeds is, in my opinion, most
 material ; so great and marked, as to entitle the
 latter, if we would use terms with truth and pro-
 priety, to the exclusive title of UNITARIAN. In
 that creed only is, really, unequivocally and ex-
 plicitly maintained the doctrine of the divine unity ;
 a strict and undivided unity. But trinitarianism is
 a multiplication of Deity ; it implies and asserts an
 union of *two other* persons, Jesus and the holy
 spirit, with the supreme Father, and it calls *them*
these three persons, one God. Though it seems to
 allow, that there is but one God ; yet, it holds a
 language inconsistent with these sentiments, and is a
 foundation for the worship of *three*. Pardon me
 then, Sir, if I assert, at least if I give it as my
 opinion, that they who hold and preserve the doc-
 trine of the unity of God, whole and uncorrupt, in

* Dr. Price's Sermons on the Christian Doctrine, p. 73.

all its simplicity, have even an exclusive title to the name of UNITARIANS. The ground of their faith and the ground on which they claim this name, is this; that the scriptures lead them "to consider " God as one person, as we, each of us, consider " ourselves as one person; and they give us not " the least ground to suppose God to consist of two, " or three, or more persons. This simple idea of " God, that he is one single person, literally pervades every passage of the sacred volumes*."

The title of one of your letters is, I observe, " On the resemblance of socinianism to deism, and " the tendency of one to the other." This also appears to me a solecism: it implies inconsistency and absurdity. It implies, that to *receive* the divine mission of Jesus has a resemblance to considering him as a deceiver: that to take him as my master, the resurrection and the life has a tendency to the rejection of him: that to learn of him is to deny him: that to profess to obey him resembles disobedience: and that to hope for the mercy of God in him will lead me to cast off this hope.

It is a singular circumstance that a resemblance and affinity to deism, should be ascribed to the creed of those among whom have arisen the most

* Lindsey's Examination of Robinson's Plea, p. 174.
 " How can we form any notion of the unity of the supreme being, but from that unity of which we ourselves are conscious." Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Mr. Gray, p. 266.

able critics in the scriptures, and the most eminent advocates for divine revelation. Socinus himself wrote a piece entitled, "An Argument for the authority of the Holy Scriptures;" which a bishop of the church of England, recommended to his clergy, as a valuable performance *: and which a divine of that church translated into English †. Lardner spent his life, and fortune, in part, in investigating and proving, "The Credibility of the Gospel." Lowman, Forster, and Duchal, were Unitarians: so were Locke, and Sir Isaac Newton. These two not only defended Revelation, but studied and explained the scriptures. The *Polish* brethren are among the commentators of the first reputation. Among authors of the present day, no one hath written so much on the evidences of christianity, as hath Dr. Priestley. I will add, from what I know of those whom you style socinians, and with whom you do not pretend to have any extensive acquaintance ‡; "that amidst all the vicissitudes of life, the great principles of the gospel are the ground of their consolation and hope. There are no men to whom the glad tidings of eternal life are more desirable, or who look forward with more steadfastness and

* Bishop Smalbrooke's Charge to the Clergy of the Diocese of St. David's, 1728, p. 34.

† Mr. Edward Coombe.

‡ Page 319.

“ joy to that period, when this mortality shall be
 “ exchanged for immortality *.”

You, Sir, attempt to prove the relation of foci-
 nianism to deism, from an agreement in some in-
 stances. So the primitive christians were charged
 by their idolatrous neighbours with atheism, be-
 cause with atheists they worshipped not their
 Gods †. There must, in general, be some princi-
 ples in common between persons whose sentiments,
 in many essential points, are remote from each
 other. Under a variety of opinions, and a great
 difference of judgment on some points, there will
 be a resemblance in other points between creatures
 endowed with the same powers and passions. For
 instance, if, as you say, “ Socinians are continually
 “ boasting of their success, and of the great in-
 “ crease of their numbers; and so are also the
 “ deists ‡.” I am apt to think, that this point of
 resemblance may be carried further, even to Mr.
 Fuller: for the manner, in which *he* speaks of
 “ hundreds of ministers,” and “ hundreds of con-
 “ gregations §,” that furnish proofs of the efficacy
 of the calvinistic system may be thought to bear
 a great agreement with the strains of triumph,
 which he ascribes to deists and fociinians. But I
 cannot think, that there is in his sentiments, or in

* Remarks on the bishop of Lincoln's Charge, p. 20.

† Bullet's History of the Establishment of Christianity.

‡ Page 314, 15.

§ Page 27.

his

his mind, any particular tendency which will lead him to the camp of either.

The general tenor of your book and your mode of arguing remind me, Sir, of a piece published in the last century, entitled, "PURITANISME the mother; SINNE the daughter: or, a treatise wherein is demonstrated from *twenty*, several doctrines and positions of puritanisme; that the *faith* and *religion* of the *puritans*, doth forcibly induce its professors to the perpetrating of SINNE, and doth warrant the committing of the same." I could wish the piece in your hands, and to see what remarks you would offer on the candor of the imputation, or the conclusiveness of the argument. The same remarks, I am inclined to think, would supply an answer to the general tenor of your own treatise.

But you "have been told that it is very common for those who go over to infidelity to pass through socinianism in their way. If this be the case," you add, "it is no more than may be expected according to the natural course of things*." A similar remark, if I mistake not, I have seen made on the side of popery against the reformation, that protestantism was the pass to infidelity. Fact may be admitted, in several instances to verify it, in both cases; and the same general answer offers to each. With respect to those who

* Page 319.

have been educated in popery, or in calvinism, the doctrines of religion have come to them before the proofs of the truth of christianity; and with a mixture of explications and inferences peculiar to each scheme. " The effect which too frequently follows, from christianity being presented in this form, is," as an excellent writer observes, " that, when any articles, which appear as parts of it, contradict the apprehension of the persons to whom it is proposed, men of rash and confident tempers, hastily and indiscriminately reject the whole*." Or if they do make a stop, and pause at some intermediate stage, having never felt a foundation, by studying the credibility of the gospel; and having probably rejected, with precipitance and haste, the principles of education, they are more easily led away by new difficulties and objections, affecting not particular doctrines but the truth of revelation. The blame, or reflection doth not lie on the sentiments, which they may, for an intermediate space, hold; but on their not having preserved, nor being taught to preserve the separation between evidences and doctrines; nor having been accustomed to investigate and ascertain the former distinctly and independently of the latter.

You have one Letter, No. XI. in which you profess to compare the " Systems in their influence

* Paley's Evidences of Christianity, b. ii. p. 391, 8vo. ed.

“ to promote the love of Christ :” as I have not, with respect to the other divisions of your work, entered into a minute and particular discussion of your reasoning, or examination of your quotations, neither shall I do it here. But I would lay before you and our readers, what I have already offered on the nature and grounds of the love of Christ, in a paper, published several years since, in “ The Theological Repository * ;” and which, I conceive, will form a suitable appendix to these letters.

But before I drop my pen, I request your attention to one passage, and the only one in your work, where my name occurs. You bring a charge of pride against the Socinians ; and among other proofs of it, is what you call their “ spouting extravagant compliments on one another.” At the bottom of the page you say, “ See Mr. Toulmin’s sermon, for Mr. Robinson.” Whether the eulogium I passed on Mr. Robinson were extravagant or not, the reader, who is conversant with his works and has perused the memoirs of him lately published, will determine. But I totally disavow the *motive* to which you insinuate my compliments to his memory is to be imputed ; viz. a pride in overrating and extolling his abilities and character, because they reflected honour on the sentiments which, before his death, it was supposed he had

* Vol. vi. p. 284.

embraced.

embraced. My respect for Mr. Robinson, I must inform you, commenced with the first knowledge I had of his character. This was years before his death, and before the change of his sentiments. The correspondence I had with him began about the year 1775. It originated with myself, and commenced with some mark of the respect due to his character, and of the friendship for which his circumstances then called, which it was happily in my power, at that time, to render to him; when he was, by principle and intimacy, connected with the baptists. My regard for Mr. Robinson did not ebb and flow with the fluctuation of *his* opinions: but was governed by the permanent qualities of the man, the friend of liberty and piety, and who had sacrificed much for conscience. I may speak the more boldly on this head, because I have given other proofs of my readiness to own and praise worth, wherever found, in the various additions I have made, as often as great and excellent characters of *any party* or creed came before me, in my new edition of Mr. Neal's "History of the Puritans."

Your imputation, therefore, has not done me justice. But you did not know me, except as a focinian, and a focinian biographer: this character you might think incompatible with that of the fair and candid historian. When you are convinced, that I have also appeared in *that* character, you will,

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I would

I would persuade myself, should an opportunity offer, be ready to own it and to retract your reflections. But I dwell too much on this trifling circumstance, which does not materially affect your argument or my own. I leave your work, my remarks, and the questions between us, to the candid and intelligent reader.

To him I recommend the following excellent sentiments from Dr. Lardner: " Truth in things
 " of religion is not a matter of indifference. Every
 " virtuous mind must be desirous to know it. But
 " no speculative belief, without practice, is sav-
 " ing, or will give a man real worth and excel-
 " lence. The knowledge that puffeth up is vain
 " and insignificant. To knowledge there should
 " be added humility, gratitude to God who has
 " afforded us means and opportunities of know-
 " ledge; a modest sense of our remaining ignorance
 " and imperfection; a diffidence and apprehensive-
 " ness, that though we see some things with great
 " evidence, and are firmly persuaded of their truth,
 " nevertheless many of our judgments of things
 " may be false and erroneous.

" We should likewise be cautious of judging
 " others. Some who have less knowledge, may
 " have more virtue. God alone knows the hearts
 " of men, and all their circumstances; and is there-
 " fore the only judge what errors are criminal, and
 " how far men fall short of improving the advan-
 " tages

" tages afforded them, or act up to the light that
" has been given them *."

With every good wish that success may attend
all your just and scriptural attempts to promote
practical religion,

I am,

Reverend Sir, respectfully,

Your humble Servant.

* Lardner's Works, 8vo. b. x, page 633. or, Two
Schemes of a Trinity considered, &c. In Four Sermons,
p. 71.

APPENDIX.

AN

ESSAY

ON THE

GROUND OF LOVE TO CHRIST.

TO THE DIRECTORS OF THE THEOLOGICAL
REPOSITORY.

GENTLEMEN,

YOUR having given a place in your valuable Repository to the paper of X. Y. Z. *on the Love of Christ*, is not only a mark of respect and distinction bestowed on that piece, but seems to carry with it an approbation of the hint with which the author closes, and to express your disposition to receive a candid and pertinent illustration of the point which he wishes to see discussed.

“ I should be very happy, says he, to see, in one
“ connected view, all that is said in the New
“ Testament respecting this duty (the Love of

“ Christ) and the explanation of those texts on the
 “ supposition that Jesus Christ was a mere man,
 “ incapable, of and from himself, of acting as he
 “ did while on earth, if the divine spirit had not
 “ constantly animated, directed and assisted him.”

The difficulty stated by X. Y. Z. appears to me, as it does to him, to be serious and important: and it is certainly of a popular nature, and will be a bar to the reception of strict Unitarian sentiments, particularly, with those who exercise their warmer affections more than their cool judgment in matters of religion. It calls therefore for a full discussion. But, besides this, it is a pleasure to read, it is a pleasure to consider and weigh the positions advanced by so candid and liberal a writer. May I be permitted therefore, through the channel of your miscellany, to submit the following remarks to his consideration.

I would begin with that mode of treating the question which he proposes in the conclusion of his piece. For this method is at once to come to the source, and fountain head, of all our obligations to the duty on which he has his difficulties. The real question with us should be, not *what motives* to the *love of Christ* doth any particular scheme of sentiments concerning his person supply; but, on what grounds do the *Scriptures* recommend and enforce it: and what doth the New Testament appear to mean by this affection? It is therefore very proper, and even a most direct way, of coming to
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some clear and authoritative conclusion, to bring into a connected view, as X. Y. Z. wishes to be done, *all the texts* that speak of this duty. The review of these texts will also suggest some remarks on what this writer hath offered on the subject.

On collecting them together, it is obvious, that the texts, in which mention is made of the *love of Christ*, divide themselves into two classes: as the phrase may mean either *his* love to us, or *our* affection to him. It is proposed therefore to follow this arrangement as being both just and natural in itself; and as the passages, under the first, will throw light upon those which we shall bring forward under the second, class.

To begin with those passages which speak of the *love of Christ* to mankind. The first texts which offer here are the declarations of Christ concerning his love of his disciples and his exhortations to them to love one another, as John xiii. 34. with ch. xv. 9, 12, 13. “ *A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friend.*” Here Christ only asserts in general terms, the affection which he bore to his disciples, and exhibits it as a ground and model of that which they should cultivate to one another. He characteriseth it as common to his Father, himself and his disciples; which

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was,

was, as to its nature, the same in each. The affection itself, and not the particular grounds or effects of it, is the point here represented and enforced. In the last of these verses our Lord does indeed point at one great proof of his affection, that of *laying down his life for his friend*, in which way the Father's love to himself could not be expressed, but their's to one another might be shewn. This passage only proves that the same disposition may exist in different minds on different principles, and be exercised in different ways. Here is nothing that leads us to conceive of a prior existence in glory and dignity, as *essential* either to express Christ's love to mankind, or as the ground of our gratitude and love to him. Nay, it is remarkable, when Christ evidently intends here to refer to the *highest proof* of his love, he speaks of it only as exerting itself in *the same way as one man can shew his love to another* : He speaks of his own death, as the death of a *man*, not as the humiliation of a being more than human, or superangelical. As far as the language of Christ here is particular and precise, it doth not correspond to the Arian notion.

Nothing can be drawn particularly in favour of that sentiment from the descriptive manner in which the apostle speaks of the love of Christ, Rom. viii. 37. *We are more than conquerors through him that loved us*. In the preceding 35th verse the apostle speaks of the *love of Christ*, not as an *affection* which he had testified by any particular acts,

acts, but as a *blessing* in which we have a present interest and on which our hopes depend: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* and it is explained, ver. 39. *by the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Here the language of the sacred writer is general, and applieth not to any particular and specific instances of Christ's love.

The next text, to be alleged, is very clear and explicit. It not only speaks of the affection, but points to the chief instance, the greatest display of it. Gal. ii. 20. *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.* To the same purpose is Eph. v. 2. 25. *Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savour, ver. 25. Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it.* To the like effect is the last passage to be quoted under this head: *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God: to him be glory for ever. Amen.*

It is observable that in these passages, where the *love of Christ* is set before us, as the object of our imitation and the ground of our praises to him; in these passages, where the writer explains it and dilates upon it, nothing is said of his having
 “ undertaken to assume a body, and to go through
 “ the various trying scenes with which his life and
 “ death were attended,” but the only instance of

his love expressly mentioned is, that "*he gave himself for us*;" as if this act were the grand proof of *his* benevolence to us, the main and sufficient ground of *our* obligations to him. The principle, on which X. Y. Z. conceives Christ to be the object of our gratitude and love is not once mentioned: a perfect silence about it reigns through all these passages. This is quite consonant to many other places, in which the love of Christ is not, in so many words, mentioned; but in which his dying for us is spoken of with great emphasis; and in which the stress is laid upon this instance of self-denial and benevolence, as the greatest he could give. See Mat. xx. 28. John x. 11. 17. Gal. i. 4. Phil. ii. 8. 1 Tim. ii. 6. Tit. ii. 14. 1 Pet. i. 19. ch. ii. 24. 1 John iii. 16.

X. Y. Z. will, on reflection, own that this was a singular act of love and friendship to mankind, and must perceive that the Unitarian sentiments preserve *that very ground* of love and gratitude to Jesus Christ, which the New Testament exhibits, and from which it derives its arguments and exhortations. In estimating this instance of Christ's affection to mankind, the circumstances and nature of his death should be taken into consideration; that he humbled himself unto the death of the cross, a most painful, and above all, a most ignominious death: that he suffered the just for the unjust to bring us to God. To these circumstances, viz. the innocence of his character, and the kind of death he underwent

underwent, the sacred writers particularly refer, as heightening his condescension and friendship. But X. Y. Z. will observe that the circumstance on which *he* lays the greatest stress, viz. a degradation from a glorious pre-existent state, though it should be supposed that it is implied in some representations of the character of Christ, yet is never even hinted at, when his death is spoken of: though so proper to cast a glory round it, as illustrating his grace and philanthropy. An Arian, it is evident from the feelings which X. Y. Z. expresses, would not have written in this strain, would not have omitted a consideration, on *his* scheme, so important and forcible. And it is inconceivable that the sacred writers, if they had entertained similar ideas, would have written as they *have done*.

These remarks offer a solution of the difficulty which X. Y. Z. intimates, when he says: "Nor do I see why, on Unitarian principles Jesus Christ is the object of a Christian's gratitude and love any more than, under the Jewish dispensation, Moses was the object of these affections to the Jews." From what has been advanced it is plain, there was a marked difference between the two characters. Moses did not *die* for his country. He practised indeed a noble self-denial for their sake: but he did not sacrifice his life in their cause. Nor, as I recollect, is he ever once held up to the Israelites as the object of their love. He was the virtuous, disinterested law-giver;

giver; a character deserving great respect: Christ was the *suffering, dying friend*; a character which insinuates itself into the heart, and constrains affection.

There is another material point of difference in the two cases. Moses promised an inheritance to the Israelites, but did not himself come to a share in the possession: and his personal connexion with them ceased at his death. Between Christ and his disciples there subsists a *common interest*, as well as one common nature; a joint participation in the same titles, privileges and inheritance: they are *his brethren*: after his resurrection he avowed the relation; on the great day he will avow it. *His God is our God: his Father is our Father*: we are the sons of God as well as he was: we are *joint-heirs* with him: he is indeed unseen: he is removed from us. But as he died, so he arose again for us: he entered into heaven as our forerunner: he will come again to our salvation, and to take us into a share of his throne and glory. We have still much to hope from him; nay, the noblest blessings to receive from him. These are *endearments*, these are bonds of affection, which did not subsist between Moses and the Israelites: and which, be it added, are in a manner undermined by the Arian scheme. For *this* represents Christ, not properly as our *elder brother*, but as a glorious being, originally, to an inconceivable degree, *above us*; and who must be considered, even notwithstanding his humiliation, as retaining

retaining his natural high prerogatives. On *that scheme* we may look up to him with reverence and gratitude ; but astonishment and awe must mingle with our affection, and must take much from the softness, pleasure and endearment of it. The love of him, as *our brother*, cannot be felt: the gentle, winning attractions of his humiliation are overpowered by the glories of his first dignity: the thought of what was *human*, though the New Testament frequently holds up *that* to our consideration, and lays great stress upon it, is lost in the contemplation of what was *superangelical*. The former is scarcely compatible, certainly does not easily and naturally harmonise, with the latter.

We next proceed to review the texts which speak of *our love of Christ*. The first under this class is Mat. x. 37. *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me: i. e.* as the words are paraphrased by Dr. Clark, “ when things come to this extremity, “ that a man must either lose the friendship of the “ dearest relations or forsake his religion; all “ earthly and temporal considerations must yield to “ the one thing necessary, of securing an eternal “ interest. For whosoever shall prefer the love of “ a father or mother, or brother or sister before “ true religion and virtue; cannot be a sincere “ disciple of Christ, or be accounted worthy to be “ admitted into the kingdom.” Or, as Dr. Dod-
dridge

dridge glosses on the words, "*he who loveth father or mother more than me*, and is induced by his regard to them to disobey my precepts or renounce my doctrine is not worthy of me."

The justness of this explanation of the love of Christ is established by the language used in the context, where our Lord enforces the confessing him before men, and warns against denying him before men; but especially by the characteristics of a true disciple, which he lays down ver. 38. viz. "taking up his cross and following after him." Such a love of Christ, it must be allowed, is not peculiar, or appropriate to any speculative ideas formed concerning his original dignity; but common to and practicable upon all schemes.

In some other places the *love of Christ* is by our divine master himself represented as consisting in obedience to him, or as deriving from obedience its essential nature. *If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; if any man love me, he will keep my words; he that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings.* John xiv. 13. 21. 23, 24. Now what is in other places represented as the ground of this obedience; no other than this, the authority with which Christ acted. Thus Peter; *Moses truly said, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatever he shall say unto you.* Thus the

the voice from heaven declared: "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*" Mat. xvii. 5.

In the 28th verse, it is true, the *love of Christ* is represented as an affection which will give those who possess it a sensible interest in what relates to the dignity and happiness of their master. But then the ground or incentive to this generous sympathy, which Christ expresseth an expectation of meeting with in his disciples, is not any prior glory, but his future exaltation.

He refers this influence of their love, not back to any past period of his being for its cause, but, forward to a future event. "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said I go unto my Father, for my Father is greater than I."

These remarks may be applied to ascertain the full force of that passage, which X. Y. Z. considers as deserving of particular notice. 1 Cor. xvi. 22. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.* X. Y. Z. it may be presumed, judges that the awful denunciation, with which the *love of Christ* is here enforced, implieth that there is a peculiar criminality, an aggravated sin, in not loving the Lord Jesus Christ. This is to be granted. But doth it therefore follow, that the guilt of it is to be estimated only, or principally, by the idea of a pre-existent glory, which he laid aside for our sakes; and which condescension was a peculiar claim to our gratitude? The apostle doth
not

not assert; he doth not even insinuate, this. For, while the nature of a Christian's love to his Master is well ascertained by the former passages to consist in obedience to his precepts, and in an attachment to his cause, the *ground* of this duty, it is intimated by the apostle, is not any character supported by Christ before the world was, but the character he sustained after his appearance on earth, especially after his resurrection, when he was made Lord and Christ *. For this is the obligation, at which the apostle points by the language, which he uses concerning his master: *our Lord Jesus Christ*, i. e. *him*, who is sat down at the right hand of God: *him*, who is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour. X. Y. Z. perhaps, may deem power and authority to be improperly considered as a ground of *love*. And this must be allowed, if by *love* we mean only the animal passion; but if, as it appears from the preceding passages to be the case, we understand by it the rational affection, or rather an attachment to the doctrine and obedience to the precepts of Christ, authority is the proper ground of it: from hence doth the obligation to it arise; especially when it is

* Hunc titulum addit, ut causam insinuet ob quam Jesum Christum diligere debeamus, & nisi id faciamus merito simus anathemate feriendi. Quis enim non debeat amare suum dominum a dextris Dei sedentem, suum Redemptorem et servatorem? Quis si hoc non faciat, non mereatur ut anathema sit? et si eum etiam dominum suum esse abneget, ut anathema sit maranatha? Vide Slichtingium in loc.

power lodged in the hands of a *benevolent* person, and authority invested in the *friend and saviour*.

One text, which may be considered as very important in this discussion, is Ephesians iii. 14. 17, 18, 19. *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.* Here the language of the apostle is so full and energetic, that some may suppose the idea of Christ's voluntary degradation from a former state of glory must be admitted, to justify the force and strength of it. But a more careful inspection of the passage will shew this to be a mere supposition. Now, not to say that the *love of Christ* cannot necessarily be understood to mean other, than the love of *God by Christ* *; the love of which he is the revealer and instrument, it is plain, that though the apostle meant the benevolence exercised by Christ himself, yet he did not refer to the labour and condescension, at the expence of which Christ hath served our eternal interest; but to the *benefits* of redemption: to the *blessings* secured and imparted,

* *Charitas Christi*, id est, qua a Deo per Christum diligimur, quæ Dei quidem est, sed quia a Christo nobis revelata et oblata est, ideo charitas vel gratia Christi dicitur, ad Rom. i. 15. and viii. 35. confer eum, 39. Vide Crellium in loc.

and not to the humiliation and sufferings by which they were secured. It appears from the context, ver. 1—12. that the apostle's mind laboured with the subject which offered to his thoughts. What was this subject? Not the condescension of Christ; but the mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid with God, the *preaching to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*. On this account it was, that he bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they *might know the love of Christ*: or the vast extent of the christian scheme of grace; its unlimited influence, and comprehensive reach.

Another passage to which, in this enquiry, we must advert is Ephes. vi. 24. *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Or with incorruption*, as it is in the margin of our bibles. Mr. Locke's note, on this text, as just and precise, deserves attention. " In this epistle to
 " the Ephesians, Paul sets forth the gospel as a
 " dispensation so much, in every thing superior to
 " the law, that it was to debase, corrupt and
 " destroy the gospel, to join circumcision and the
 " observances of the law as necessary to it. Having
 " written this epistle to this end, he here, in the
 " close, having the same thought still upon his mind,
 " pronounces *favour on all those who love the Lord*
 " *Jesus Christ in incorruption*, i. e. without mixing
 " or joining any thing with him in the work of
 " our

“ our salvation, that may render the gospel useless
 “ and ineffectual.”

The only text, which remains to be produced under this head is 1 Pet. i. 8. *Whom having not seen ye love.* The only idea, on the subject, peculiar to this clause, is that of the circumstance which set off to advantage the affection which the Christians, whom Peter addressed, felt towards their divine master: namely, that it was not aided and invigorated by a personal acquaintance with its object. But this passage suggests nothing particular concerning the nature and obligations of our love to Christ. And though in the context there is an express and animated representation of benefits derived to us through Jesus Christ, or to be communicated at his appearance, yet there is no reference to the principle which X. Y. Z. conceives to lie at the foundation of love to Christ. The apostle insists upon the *resurrection* of Christ, and on his *appearance* again, but as to his *coming into this world*, from a prior and more exalted state of being, he is silent about it.

Thus we have placed together, in one connected view, all that is said in the New Testament concerning this duty, the love of Christ, except one passage: in which there is an ambiguity; but an ambiguity that doth not affect this argument, but only makes it uncertain to which class of texts, in our arrangement, it belongs; whether to those that speak of the affection of Christ towards us, or
 of

of ours towards him. It is in 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. *The love of Christ constraineth us : because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead : and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again.* But which ever way the language of the apostle in the first clause, is explained, the following clauses amply state the ground, on which the sentiments of love and gratitude to Christ were felt and cultivated : *This is no other, than his dying for us.*

On the survey of the whole, it is remarkable, that the love of Christ is, in *every* passage, represented and enforced without any regard to, and *totally independent* of, the consideration of his having left a former state, and relinquished any prior glory. I should conceive therefore, that if strict Unitarian principles have any "tendency to abate" the love and reverence which have hitherto appeared to X. Y. Z. to be due to Jesus Christ," it must proceed not from these principles themselves, but from the association, that has long existed in his mind, being dissolved by embracing those principles. The texts we have enumerated, exhort and persuade to the love of Christ on principles very *distinct* and *remote* from the idea of his pre-existence in circumstances of great power and glory. These principles are therefore to be deemed the just, sufficient, and indeed only *scriptural* grounds of that affection. If they do not beget
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and cherish lively sentiments of love and gratitude to Jesus Christ, the defect must be, not in the principles, but in *the mind*; which, having but lately received them, doth not yet feel the full force of them.

It often strikes me, that Arian christians are so accustomed to consider the character and condescension of Christ, in connexion with their idea of his former dignity; they are so habituated to ascribe in a manner, all the merit and excellence of his benevolence to his quitting that dignity, that they seem to overlook the condescensions and humility of his deportment, "the benevolent part which he acted on earth," and his dying for us; on which last great instance of his friendship, as we have seen, the scriptures lay the stress; and the consideration of which they exhibit, *detached by itself*, without representing it as deriving its merit from a contrast with his former glory. Upon the Arian scheme it should seem, Christ cannot be supposed to look upon death *with the sentiments and feelings of a man*. He must have been a stranger to the *natural love of life*; to that strong attachment to the present state of being, of which we are conscious: for the continuance of life would present to him nothing worthy the desire of so *exalted* a being. To die, in *his* case was, on *that* scheme, to resume his dignity; to be delivered from the body, which he had assumed. Under these circumstances, what
self-

self-denial, what sacrifice could it be in *Him*, to give up his life?

Should it be urged, that to represent the benevolence as principally consisting in his submission to the death of the cross, without taking in the consideration of his prior glory, is to reduce his benevolence to a level with that of many other men, who have willingly met death in its worst forms, for the sake of truth and human happiness; it may, in reply, be asked, when this argument is brought forward, is not what was peculiar to the case of Christ, forgotten? Is it not forgotten; that, as he himself said, when he was apprehended, he could have "prayed to his Father, and thereupon HE " would have sent legions of angels to rescue him:" That "no man took his life from him, but that he " laid it down of himself?" These expressions denote that Christ was not a mere *passive instrument*: but that he acted in his great character with a benevolent *design*, and preferred the accomplishing the kind purposes of it, in the fullest extent, to the preservation of his life; though he could have preserved it with honour and piety; though he could have procured a super-natural, consequently a glorious, interposition in his favour.

The remark of X. Y. Z. with respect to the use Christ made of his miraculous powers, viz. "That it cannot be on any ground supposed, that " the same divine energy would have attended " Christ on the supposition of its having been
" possible

“ possible for him to have attempted the application
 “ of it to any purpose, directly opposite to those
 “ for which it was bestowed :” and his more general
 observation, “ I cannot suppose, that our Saviour
 “ had it in his power to have defeated the purposes
 “ of infinite wisdom, by which he was continually
 “ directed.” These remarks, I apprehend, may be
 retorted and applied with equal force to the Arian
 sentiment. On that scheme, he was in actual possession
 of glory and power, more than human or angelic,
 before the world was : which the counsels of divine
 benevolence required him, for a time, to relinquish
 and lay aside. Had he it in his power to counteract
 those purposes, by declining to assume a body, and
 to go through the various trying scenes with which
 his life and death would be attended ? Or if he were
 a voluntary agent in relinquishing this dignity, why
 ought he not to be considered as *equally so in declining*
 to avail himself of his miraculous powers to answer
 any purposes of ambition ; and in giving up his
 life for mankind ?

For though he did, not by *his own* power, perform
 the works, but his *Father* who was with him, did them :
 yet the consciousness of such an energy attending
 him, the consciousness that God “ heard him always”
 was to one, who was in all points tempted like as
 we are, a strong temptation to pride and ambition.
 The effects, the glorious displays, of this energy gave
 him an amazing

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influence,

influence, which was in itself a powerful temptation to swerve from the great ends of his mission. But he was superior to these snares: and, in this view, have not his self-denial, humility, and death, singular merit*? In a word, on the Arian or Unitarian scheme, Christ was as really a voluntary agent in the execution of the divine purposes, as are any of us in the common spheres of life. The merit and glory of an agent, acting from motives of benevolence, freely embarking in a great and noble design, and, in the prosecution of it, meeting with reproach, poverty, sufferings, and death, are justly to be given to him: and bring us under the obligations of love and gratitude.

These remarks are submitted to X. Y. Z. and it is referred to him, whether the love of Christ doth not stand in the scriptures, *wholly independent* of the idea of his pre-existent glory. *That idea* may be allowed to supply a motive, a ground for the duty: but the duty ariseth from other considerations; and wherever it is mentioned, is not inculcated by *that* argument.

PHILOSOTER.

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* See these thoughts pursued and illustrated with great force, by the excellent *Dr. Price* in his sermons, p. 357—360.

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